



les vignettes
andreas gripp

les vignettes

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les vignettes

Andreas Gripp

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les vignettes

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Poems

The Reason I'm Too Cheap to Buy Your Art	1
The Haymaker	4
Eleanor, Amongst the Clouds	6
Toby	10
Japan	13
"me too"	16
Yes, We're On Our Way	18
The Puffin	22
Go Fuck Your Self-Help	26
Thirty-three and a third	29
The Second Moon	32
L'artiste	35
Brian	40
Risk	44
February	47
Why You Cancelled Our Subscription	50
Wild Bill McKeen	53
They've Made Me Hate the Herons	57
Sturnidae	60
Calendars	63
The Sun that Never Came	66
Everything is Hitler	70
The Fossil	74
Singsong, or yet another schmaltzy verse of undying love	77
Detroit	79
Les Chapeaux	82

Early Dementia	86
The Mona Fucking Lisa	90
Seven Day Rental	94
I Am The Light	96
Layers	98
Apophis	101

Acknowledgements

26 poems in this collection have been written from scratch in 2025, while the following date from 2023/2024 and have appeared elsewhere: *"me too"*; *The Puffin*; *Wild Bill McKeen*; *Detroit*; *The Mona Fucking Lisa*. *Seven Day Rental* is an older poem which I thought of while putting this volume together, and is presented here with light revisions.

Notes

p.50 *Why You Cancelled Our Subscription* Sülze is a German style of head cheese where the gelatinous aspic has an acidic vinegary taste.

p.66 *The Sun that Never Came* Pete Best was fired from The Beatles in August of 1962 and replaced by Ringo Starr. Original bassist Stuart Sutcliffe left the band in 1961 and focused on his paintings. One of his most notable pieces was *Figurative Mother and Child*. He died in April of 1962. Yoko Ono's *Yes* was a 1966 conceptual artwork in which the viewer was expected to climb a painted ladder and use a magnifying glass to look at the word YES which is printed on paper beneath a sheet of glass suspended from the ceiling.

p.79 *Detroit* Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and Alphonse de Tonty founded Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit in 1701. The three Anishinaabe Nations whose homelands were in this area are the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi.

p.90 *The Mona Fucking Lisa* The painting was started in 1503 by Leonardo da Vinci, who embellished it in the years that followed. A variant of Lisa's married surname was del Giocondo.



The Reason I'm Too Cheap to Buy Your Art

The wall that is bare
in our bedroom
is a painting all its
own.

Someone made the *effort*
to submerge their brush in
Behr, smooth out every
stroke, proclaim *beige*
was a matter of
choice, out of every single
colour in the spectrum,

foreseeing that we'd be
wowed, by this minimal
masterpiece, discard our Andy
Warhol to the Value Village
bag, moan that we are sick
of Campbell's soup,
that it was just
another knock-off
someone scrapped on
garbage day.

I look for their initials
in the corner, say it's hidden
by our dresser, the one on which
I lay a pair of socks,
say it's just as good as Shulman,
boast I save the planet—
eschewing carbon shipping
from Czech Republic.

And as for your friend
at the market, the one I feign
I never see,
who hawks her sketches
from a stall, I'll explain
that we are tapped,
that everything is worked
into our rent,

that one *day*
we'll have her over,

and the three of us
will stand beside the
blinds, putting her to
shame, inhale the
tour de force
we've been bestowed.

The Haymaker

Every poet I adore
has written one-too-many
books. Filled with poems
which are insipid,
absent of spark &
fire, the fatigue
of wearied tropes,

as if the author
wouldn't humbly
hang 'em up, the *grail* of
one more shot,
an elusive Griffin win;

a fighter unable to
ponder a towel's *toss*,
his boxing gloves a smear
of double red — more *his*
than his opponent's,
staggering to his corner
after felled by a sudden
hook, like a bull
by a matador, stabbed —

avoiding the *told-you-so*
look from his trainer,
who pleaded he retire
while he could,
still *perched* upon a pillar,
yielding to temptation
for another day of
pay, couldn't resist the
lure

of a final taste of
glory, sprawled upon his
back upon the canvas, staring
at the ceiling like it's
sky, like a bard awaiting birds
that wouldn't show,
some coup-de-grâce
no longer in his reach.

Eleanor, Amongst the Clouds

*I found myself remembering the day in
kindergarten, when the teacher showed us
Dumbo, and I realized for the first time
that all the kids in the class, even the bullies,
rooted for Dumbo, against Dumbo's tormentors.
Invariably they laughed and cheered,
both when Dumbo succeeded and
when bad things happened to his enemies.
But they're you, I thought to myself.
How did they not know?*

— Elif Batuman

It started
in second grade,
the red rib-
bon that never
was, your smock-frock
that expanded — lacking
a pin-sized
scar,

the frowns
from *vacancy* —

your mother, your
father, who in public
whispered *she's someone
else's kid; we're only baby-
sitting.*

You stood slumping
in the corner
of the stage—the obligatory
tree, the one that's mute,
crestfallen, saying your
trembling's
from the gales
that weren't there
(if someone asked).

And yes, you
heard it all:
so large you
pulled the cosmos
to your orbit,
a time-zone
unto *yourself*,

your thighs of
rolling thunder,
louder than Zeus
& Thor,

the day the teacher
signed your name
for *Valkyrie*,

one who bore a
pizza for a
shield, her sword
a pogo stick,

a sow
among the
cirrus, told
she cannot fly—

twelve years, her
epitaph:

*I had fat but
wasn't. You robbed me
of my wings.*

*Watch me
soar above you, my feathers
piercing fiercely
through the wind.*

Toby

It started with a
Paula Frazer song,
when you said
the pedal steel

was ever-grating
on your hearing,
like the wailing
of a cat
in fervent heat.

It's why you refuse
to listen to Country, *despite*
Beyoncé's Stetson,
latest Grammy win.

The wipers
on our windshield
are like the cat who
spies the robin
near the window,
the *reciprocation*
of its jaw, its splintered
meows of want.

You say I'm like a kitty
while you stroke me
on my stomach, tenderly,
that I need to
perfect my purr. I'd only
cleared my throat.
There isn't a way for
phlegm to sound so soothing.

You spot me in the night,
writing all this down
without a candle
on the desk;
the quaking, up-down
frenzy of my pen. *Only a cat*
can see well in
the dark. Adding my ears
jerked 90 degrees

the very moment
that you said it,
noting my mustache—
like the whiskers
Toby had,

sliding stealthily
along the wall when
you were young, snaring
the chubby mouse
that somehow reminds
you of your Aunt,

the one who stepped
on Toby's tail
while he was hunting,
for the jay near
the rosemary bush,
dashing into the woods
to never be heard
from ever again.

Japan

Everything I do
is one and done.
No one does a jig-
saw more than once.
Same with word-
search & sudoku.
And there's none to
care for the term
in 9 across—
once the boxes
have been filled.

I came across
my colouring book
from the middle of
second-grade. A rhinoceros
in orange. A zebra in
blue & red.

There wasn't a way
to do them all again,
much like love &
hate.

I've never had
a goldfish
in my life. Not because
they never live up to
the colour
they falsely boast,
but the fact
they're belly-up
before you know it—
sometimes *prior*
to being named.

There's a flower
in my book on Asian
Travel, circa 1988.
As far as utility
goes, it's as useless
as a second nose.
The book, that is.
Absent of tech &
hotspots. No QR
codes in sight. But every so
often,

I inhale the
carnation she gave me
on the night of the senior
prom. There's no scent left,
of course. Just a page-
dried recollection
that we had the
time of our lives.
Had joked of
going to Sendai,
climb some temple steps

until we're out of
voice and breath,
hear a Roshi
tell us to stop
a single stair
before the top, breathe
the floral air of
almost-done,
know that nothing really
lasts more than a day,
this transient turn of
axis, the peeling of
hearts & bells.

"me too"

When I tell you *I love you*
you answer "me too"

and perhaps I misconstrue,
that you love *yourself*
like the affirmations
advise,

the ones we see on Instagram,
that every *sprat*
has churned them out,
like a poetaster
in a fast-food window,

where you pick up a side of
"you're better off without him"
plus some platitude on the rain
to wash it down;

or maybe "me too" is a memory,
in the (not so) recent past:

an abusive ex, a diddling dad,

the gymnastics coach who always
held you snug, checked out your
ass instead of your landing,
after vaulting and parallel bars;

but then I've always read too
much into your words,
thinking there's some *story*
below the surface,
a recollection
that encircles like a shark,
that you're afloat
in a punctured dinghy
awaiting rescue,

by an aqua knight who rides
the seven seas, one who sees
a kraken where there's not,

thinks "right back at you,"
"ditto kiddo"

is the beast from a thousand
fathoms he's come hastily
to slay.

Yes, We're On Our Way

Before our dinner
reservations, we quarrel
over *late*, whether those
who've passed away

should be deemed
as awfully *early*,
deceased before their
time—
expired,

the *late* Amanda Crouch,
the *late* Armando Brown,
and someday in the future—

the *late*
James Cordon,
former host
of the *Late Late Show*,

the one *canned*
by CBS
in '23,

that its obit
read *Late Late Late*,

the one we
viewed as
young *insomniacs*, cursing
our need to wake
at 6am.

My father was
never late
to *anything*, showing
up at parties
over an hour
before the rest,
that awkward sit
on the couch,

while the host is in the
kitchen:
scrambling to make
hors d'oeuvres,
calming her toddler's
tantrum,

telling her dog to
wait
for that needed
walk,

on which he'll do
his urgent thing
upon the tire
of father's car, the Mazda
brazenly parked
behind her Beetle,
preventing her to
drive
to the liquor store,
for the brandy
that keeps her
mellow, sociable,

with every care of
living—somehow
washed away,

allows you to
forget
the six-feet-under,
those who could never
envisage
what being fashionably
tardy meant.

The Puffin

Hear this:
a puffin
is not a baby
penguin,
despite my decades
of thinking it so.

I cannot be
angry
at the puffin,
its countenance
of cute,
its psychedelic
beak,
no matter how hard
I try;

adoring its every
sway
from side-to-side,
much like its
fellow seabird,

surprised by its
capacity to fly,
confused by
its being an
imprint
of Penguin Books,
its children's line
since 1941,

that they're clearly
to blame
for my ignorance—
there in *A Little Princess*,
in the tales of
Anne and Alice,
and especially
Call of the Wild,

which, to my chagrin,
contained no penguins
at all—
clueless I was
on *where* they
really lived,

thinking *perhaps*
they were away
when Jack London
came to visit,

shopping for tuxedos,
at the place the
puffins do,
who took to the air
once suited —

while the penguins
doubled back
with their receipts,
fuming at the
snugness
of their fit,

pouting like Pingu,
crisp like Chilly Willy,

cursing their genetics,
their ever-inability
to soar,

retracing every
step in single file,
their long, bitter
waddle
in the snow.

Go Fuck Your Self-Help

*If life gives you
lemons
don't settle for
lemonade.
Make a mansion of
meringue,
wash it down with
whisky sour.*

I want to plunge a
pie
into this self-help
guru's face,
sock him
in the middle,
watch him lose his
lunch, his *idiot*
recipe.

Life has dealt me
cabbage, to roll
round squares of
spam.

Watch my email
blitzed by hucksters,
lying mother-
fucksters, who sell
the rancid oil
from *basilisks*.

There. I feel better
now I've vented.
Chalk it up
to primal scream.
They say Lennon
lost his mind

when he under-
took the practice.
Knew his name
half-rhymed with
lemon. Sense he'd *perish*
just past his prime.
What else goes with
dream? The swirl of citrus-
cream? Imagine
no possessions.

Look—you've bought this
hook and sinker,
my line about the
outhouse
worth a million.
Topple your home of
cards.
Watch me deal a
King
from the very
bottom. Convince you
that it's *you*. That an Ace
was just a *one*
which knew its
worth.

Thirty-three and a third

We've been locked
in an iterant
eddy, a satellite
that's fused
into its rhythm,
a record that
wheels forever,
despite the ending of its
grooves, a needle's vexing
muffle
against the label;
both of us
unwilling
to finally rise, lift the stylus
from its place; or

you the ball, I the chain,
a link like
monkeys-in-a-
barrel,

awaiting the *inevitable*
break-of-arms,

when the one
who is falling
and the one who has felled

spy the ground that's
far below, a thud heard
round the world, a ring
of smoke that swells

as from a coyote
dropped over a
crag, failing to figure

roadrunner
was never a
meal

but that evasive
clasp of love,

so aphonic
in its snare, so obsessive
in regret
it's unable to finally
die—

despite Acme's
incessant promise
this is it.

The Second Moon

You may have
heard the Earth
got a 2nd moon,
33 feet in width,
for almost 60 days.

What you probably
didn't know
was the blandness
of its name: 2024
PT5—not exactly *Luna*
in the night.

None of us
should blame it
for not wanting
to stick around, circle
the planet
in disgust, watching the
horrid events
this past
November:

the shelling of
tents & children,
the wrath of
Hurricane Helene,
the men in charge
who said that nothing's
wrong—it's simply just
the weather's
temperamental;

and an oligarch's
second coming, saying
he's the light of the world,
building up the
borders
that from space
cannot be seen.

Or maybe it's
merely
no one
wrote a poem
about its face,

proposed beneath
its shadow
to a beloved,
had a schoolyard
reverie

of stepping
on its surface,
like some kid
might
someday hence,

amid the
bouncing
bop
of humankind,
planting a starry
flag
forever frozen
in its wave, shooting
off its mouth
it's here to stay.

L'artiste

We can't argue that
a banana duct-taped
to a wall is just as artistic
as Rembrandt. Or maybe
we already have
and that's the problem.

—ACG

They told me
to never come back,
the gallery did, after
I broke
the silence,

singling out the
sculpture
in the centre—
derisively
so—

a turnip
firmly pasted
to the wall,

that there's a shortage
now of yellow
UHU sticks,
my bellowing
it's the work

of a 21st-
century
da Vinci,
that the firehose
close at hand
(behind the glass),
warning *break*
in case of flames,
was a better
piece by far.

You advise me
to backup
this poem,
post it on a
cloud.

I counter
I'll print it
out, email every
draft

to my 31
accounts,
upload it to the
Archive
which is free,

eventually hang it up
above the mantle,
within breath
of your father's
ashes,

framed in pseudo-
gold, as if to mock
his early attempt
at *genius*,
when he showed us
a painted portrait
of his dog, slouching
in the grass,

unable to
decipher *Rover*
from his stick.

We laughed
as soon as he
left. I think
I broke
a rib.

It's time
that we digress.
You ask me
what if every
single medium
comes to fail?
My laptop.
The paper.
Every brush and
roll of tape.

By then it won't have
mattered.

My memory
expired. Unable
to summon
my words. Except
*let's not leave the
lemon—
within its wooden
bowl.
Let's divvy up
the pieces
like an orange;*

its juice upon
the table
like the splatters
on cotton canvas—

a regular Jackson
Pollock,
whom I doubtless
would have cited
had I been able
to remember
his name.

Brian

He got his nickname
from a dyslexic, who thought
him to be
the smartest kid in class.

Nice catch, Brain!
birthed the laughter
in phys ed., from the
teacher calling strikes
behind the plate,
the shortstop
in her shorts and
ponytail, who spread it
wide and far.

A pair of
decades later,
shelving science
at the store, his face
is flushed
amid the Dawkins
books, the best-
seller from *deGrasse*,

that you shouldn't call him
Tyson, lest someone
mix him up with
Iron Mike.

Brian stops and wonders
if whoever made
his name badge

did it *deliberately*,
for the customers
who'd cackle if
they saw it, hiding their
grins in arms
as if they're wings,

the manager paging
Brain!
to the front of the
cash, figuring
he could fix
the discrepancy.

There came the
day he sighed
beneath the sky,
giving his pate
a shake,

making certain
what's under his
skull had understood,
that it could have
been much worse,
the shame that would
inflame him,

if he'd been Denis
with a single "n" —
the 6th-grade girls
a-giggle, the P
that began the
moniker

making him
duck his head
into his desk,
like an ostrich
which is smarter
than we think, aware
that sand is
timeless
like the stars
(if not locked
in a glass of
hours);

most of which
beyond
the names of man;
silent as the light
years wedged
between them.

Risk

I toss my darkened
Ray-Bans
under the swath of
the Milky Way.
The gleam of
two hundred
billion suns.

My walls are painted
black. AC/DC black.
The murk of *Back*
in Black. Scratch
a single match, watch
my shade and shadow
do a backflip
from the floor.
Score a 10
for execution,

an 11
for breaking both
my brittle ankles
on the mat.

I might
have gut its padding
years ago.

I refuse
to do a thing
that's labelled *safe*.
Do a handstand
on the sandbar
in the lake.
Swimming out
instead

to the spot of
deepest depth, spinning
on my skull
like a drunken Aqua-
man. The seaweed
there is upper 90s
proof.
And we're duped
to down the lie
that we cannot
hold our breath.

Here, let me prove it.
Drop me off
on Elon's
phallic *Starship*,
within the dust
of Saturn's
rings. I'll squint and say
they're worth their
weight in gold. 24
orange carrots;
improving on my
vision as I bite,
able to sight the *Earth*
as a distant
grain,

that I'll wipe it
from my foot
with all the others,
with the towel
from my dare-
less *childhood*,

when I stood upon
the beach and read
the warnings:

risk of *currents*,
hungry *sharks*,
the *men*
who strut in
Speedos,

by every girl &
boy when no one's
looking.

February

It's getting harder
than ever
to dress. The boxers
knocked about as if
Joe Frazier was in the
dryer. I'll pull them to my
chest, ensure they stop their
slide at awkward moments.

My jumbled
muddle of socks—
more holes than
polyester. If cheese,
they'd surely be Swiss.

My glove
is somehow missing
its middle finger. I swear
I've never flipped
the fucking bird.
There's no one
out in winter
anyway. Least of all my ex.

And who will wear their
sweatpants to a funeral?
As Seinfeld said
I've clearly given up.
Comfort's now my goal.
Catch me double-
dipping at the luncheon.
At least they're lululemon.

My *I'm with stupid*
tee is partially faded.
The *with* is white-on-white.
If they hadn't cranked the
heat, I'd have never
hung the jacket.

It's the one you
bought me many
years ago, in the days we were
in love, the zipper
down the middle
spurning the close,
your promise that you'd
fix it
before it snowed.

Why You Cancelled Our Subscription

Your father
walked in downpours
with *The Times*
upon his head. Never
once unfolded.
It was cheaper than
an umbrella. A much
better *use*
of the trees.

I think I see him
now, as the gusts
snatch fedoras
from the others, their
scalps more skin
than hair, more lagoon
than tropic isle, grateful
he'd never
splurged, never travelled
with his wife
no matter how
the papers prodded,

and that *War!*
was now a leak
into the sewer,
to be mastered
by its stench,
along with the
daily funnies
that never were,
the box score
from another
Cubbies loss,

and a memorial
for your mum
he never read, her lot
now cast with the
surge of printer's
ink,

a recipe for
Sülze

that none of you
could stand,

not even *Klaus*
the family dog
(if but an hour), who
upchucked all its scraps,

runover
the very day
you brought him home,

after responding
to an ad
beneath your mother's
horoscope,
vowing *today*
will be the luckiest
one of all.

Wild Bill McKeen

This village
through which we're
driving is home
to "Wild Bill McKeen"

and though we haven't
a clue who he is—
or was—
his name is on
a banner in the air,
tied to a pair of
streetlights
to make certain
we'll never miss it.

The posted limit
of speed is only
30, and there's
not a lot to look at
so we defer to
our conjectures
as we crawl—

surmise
he's a hockey
player,
spent his time
in the *penalty* box,
a master of slash
and slew foot,
told the refs to
go fuck off,
took a piss
on the Lady Byng.

We then travel
back in time,
think he may have
robbed a coach, rustled cattle,
outdrew the county
sheriff after starting
a barroom brawl.

We think of synonyms
for *wild*,

saying his hair was
endless, unruly,
he'd grown a beard
from chin to foot,
grunted like an ape,
clutching a raw steak
with savage hands—
tearing off the
pieces with his teeth.

In minutes
we're back
in the country, racing
past the farms
and grazing horses,
say his rep
was overblown—
mere hyperbole,

from the folks
who've led some
pretty boring lives,

that Wild Bill McKeen
took his steaming
cup of coffee
without cream,

once jaywalked
across the road
while it was raining,

returning a *book*
overdue
by a day,

never guessing
he'd be immortal
on a sign,

or better yet—
in a poem,

by someone too lazy
to google
his claim to fame.

They've Made Me Hate the Herons

Every poem I've offered
has been forged and cried
before,

by another bloody bard,
who beat me to the punch.
I'd like to toss a
punch upside his head
(yes, *his*. I'd do nothing of
the kind to a woman/poet. I'd
lock my *gaze* upon her,
with my grandma's
evil eye. Never discount
the worth of
bad genetics).

What? *Another* fucking
poem about a bird?!
Toss it on the heap
with all the rest.
There's more of
them
than countless
stars and sand.

And yup, *that's*
been said already.
Why have we *yet* to
finish Pi?

And my flower in the
meadow? Done for the
trillionth time.
*But it's bursting through
the snow, while the others
are merely bulbs. Done,
you ignorant fool.*

What about my hound
who disappeared?
While playing
fetch the stick?
Done. Bought the T-
shirt. No one gives a shit
about your grief. We're all
desensitized; painted
into corners
by our clichés.

So please forgive me,
darling, for ceasing
to pen you verse. For
avoiding the blue of
your orbs. Evading
the taste of your
mouth. I'd be *drawn*
to page and ink,
its fishhook/gravity
(yes, yes, I *know*.
You don't have to tell me)—

fervently a-sweat,
ripping out my hair
to say what no one's
screamed before
in a thousand years.

Sturnidae

Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastick toe

—John Milton, from *L'Allegro*

Surrounded by their
chatter, we note we *haven't*
seen the starlings
after dusk,
a whirl of black-
on-black,
how pointless that would
be, while Sol is on its errand
to warmly soak
the other *side*—

the Philippines, Australia,
the islands of the rising
red.

They sleep *inverted*
with their eyes
toward the ground, you've heard.

Like the bats. *Have you ever seen
the bats?*

My phobia
won't allow it, I respond,
something about the
flight of ghastly rats

but by then you're back
to talk about the star-
lings:

*They trip the light fantastic
while it's day,
trying all their lives
to get our attention.*

As to *what* they might be
saying you simply shrug.
We'd be indifferent
to their warnings, think we
know it all
when it comes to love.

Sunlings,
you conclude,
that's what we should've
called them, so we'll
heed at last the
nightly murmuration
of the stars—

so slow to our perception
but at the sprint
and dash of light,

their wings of silver-
white, every feather
standing
on its head,

revealing the *world*
is upside-down
and only the birds
have twirled to see it.

Calendars

When I ask how long
we've had the
colander, you respond it's
relatively new.

But I should have
grilled of dates,
not the straining
of water from starch.

The heater in the
bedroom
by the drapes?
Relatively safe
you say, the odds of a
fire starting—relatively
low you add,
as if that brings me
comfort, falling short
of the certainty
of *never*.

You know me
all too well,

somehow sense
what I'm bound to
query,
as if a traveller
through the ins and
outs of time.

We talk of Einstein's
theory, say *Relativity's*
not related
to the odds;
has nothing to do with
nearly, or some phantom
paradox,

and the fact that I despise
my nearby uncle
and his kin?
Relatives are surely
overrated, blood
is thinner than wine,

and the speed of light
will drop you
nowhere fast—

Aunt Petunia's
birthday party,
the one that's still to come
in 20 years,

when the guests
will see your visage,
assume that you've been
slathered in Olay, beg
to know your *secret*
to staying young,
that you'll keenly
keep us guessing
till the dawn.

The Sun that Never Came

People raise their eye-
brows, whenever I say that
Pete's
my favourite Beatle —

that *he* was the
Best of the lot,
refusing to *off*
himself — when Ringo
and the boys
were running wildly
from the girls, buying
second mansions, everybody
in their mop-tops
cloning the look.

There he is, looking *in*
from beyond the wind-
ow, the guy who's
shovelling coal —
from the bowels
of the yellow
sub,

asking everyone
to let him be, that it's been
a hard night's day, desist
from egging him on, noting
his hair's more salt than
pepper.

At least Sutcliffe
never knew
what would-have-been,
drink himself to
stupor, seeing Yoko
in the space of
Abbey Road, sitting
where he could've
on an amp,
watching accolades
pour in

for a ladder be-
neath the ceiling,
that *NO*
should have been the
final word,

knowing she couldn't
hold a candle
to his *Figurative*
Mother and Child.

See? Even in this poem
he's been usurped,
that it's the A
in this exhibit:

of the *drummer*
never getting
enough respect, that the Starr
was forever out-of-tune,
that his beats were out-of-sync,
that it never came to light
due to a million screaming
teens,

that Paul once passed him
by on Penny Lane,
looking him in the eye
without *hello*,

a caring

how've you been?

That a bird just

shit on his head, failing to

give him a tissue

to wipe it off,

a second for the

tear he'd feign

was rain.

Everything is Hitler

When I snagged the
final apple from the
bowl, you fumed that
I was Hitler. My seventh
from a dozen
in a bag. Offering
you a *slice*
didn't appease.

And there,
tugging at the blanket
in our bed, taking a nano-
metre more than my
allotment—Hitler
once again.

I remember when
we met, at the meeting
of *The Reds*—the Bolshevik
subversives, from which
I was later
banned,

scoffing at the
Guevara *wannabes*,
their camouflage
trousers, the puffs
on their cigars,
confessing that I'm
Social Democrat,
that it's OK
if we forego the
starred berets:

*get the fuck
out of here
HITLER!*

And my hinting
Bernie Sanders
needs to tone it down
a notch? That I liked a
post from Carney?
*Give your jackboots
another polish
Uncle Adolf!*

And now this
very morning,
when I didn't
replace the *emptied*
bag of milk,
emerging from the
kitchen

without the wiping
of the white
above my lip —
like wearing
half a mustache,
one that's in the
groove below my
nose, picking a
piss-poor moment

in which to stretch
my arm & hand out
in *hello*,

tread in
blatant goose-step
round a spill,
bop my head to the
burst of Wagner's *Ring*—
bleeding from the
ceiling just above us.

The Fossil

This could have been a
piece about the climate,
the Hummer
you think I drive
throughout the town,
bringing me fro and to.

I do much more than
simply galivant. Spy me
scrawl my couplets
in the car, stopped
at red's command, idle
on my *Friendster*
that you somehow think
I have. The *Hotmail*
I never figured
how to open.

My foray
into socials
only lasted
for an hour. And what's
a *heart emoji*? Seriously,

WTF? Is everything
an acronym
these days?

But it's my use
of Bic and ink. The fact I've a
thousand caps of
blue I've never tossed.
I'd shove them on my
fingers
if they were only
wide enough.
But one day they'll be
fleshless. Please bury them
in my crypt
with all my other
out-of-dates:

my unrequited
crush, the note I passed
while the teacher
slammed the brushes
hard together,

a cloud of rising *chalk*
up through my nose, oh-so
late Cretaceous.

Now excuse me
if you will. I have further
obsolescence
on which to scribe,
a *Stegosaurus* —
on which to ride
to my setting sun,

while you share
your self-love
Instapoem

with a press
upon your phone.
You think it's *immortality*.
But it's our bones
that last forever.

**singsong, or yet another schmaltzy verse
of undying love**

I'll love you till

the poets run out of rhymes

—Johnny Mathis, *The Twelfth of Never*

I think it best
to leave out all the
rhymes, make it not
an ode
without abode,

that its lot
is with the slush,
those leaning, paper
pillars
every editor
abhors,

as if a Pisan
tower, the swirl
of ascending
steps, a rooftop
where the stanzas
gaze to space,

your face
in every spiral's
trillion spheres,
the promise of *gravity*,

that it's all been sung
before,
in a lyric's vow to *never*
lose its fervor,
never discard
each thing deemed
beautiful,
limitless,

where ten *digits*
make endless Pi,
twenty-six *letters*

an infinity of
poems, gasping
for their breath
amid the rhythms.

Detroit

Day-twah

is how you pronounced
it, my ostentatious friend,
as though the French
were still infesting
where the river
worms and bends;

as if both *Antoine*
and *Alphonse*
had a share in
Motown Records;
Soul Train
spinning a sultry
Édith Piaf;

a fleur-de-lis
the crest of *Hockey-*
town, with neither wheel
nor red-dipped wing
discernible;

the Tigers
plugging *croissants*—

for the stretch
in the bottom seventh.

And then there's Sir Graves
Ghastly, sporting a
Parisian beret, out of his
screaky coffin,
desperately needing a tin of
WD-40, purchased
across the river, *half*
of the instructions
en Français—to the chagrin
of every *Windsorite*
around.

My dear, flamboyant
fellow, the French
were *never* the first—
it simply sounds
romantic
to the non-
Indigenous folk,

for the lovers of a
Hunter's Moon,
painting the sky
aglow, like a drunken
Delacroix,

strolling within
the shadows
of Art Deco's
Fisher Building,
as if beneath
the Eiffel Tower,

ambling hand-in-hand,

toward the man
selling franks
on petite baguettes,
a smell of ripened
Brie that wafts
around him.

Les Chapeaux

I wear baseball
caps in winter,
a toque in mid-
July. Yet every
day's the same.

I gape out-
side the window
with my cooling
cup of coffee. Always
pour a dash
of Irish Cream. Greet
the same old robin
on the hedge, who's
just as bored as me.
I have no *recipe*
to offer
for the worms.

The word from
google news
is never altered.

Trump this. Trump
that. Another
cyber hack. And that slush
will soak my socks
on ol' St. Paddy's.
I'll hit the tired
sack at 9pm. Writhe
around like something
that is snatched

while it is wet.
In nine unhappy
hours, I live this
yet again.
No—strike that with a
line. This isn't close
to *living*.
Like Bill Murray's
Groundhog Day.

I'll trod
along to *Shoppers*
before the valentines
are gone.

Grab
the one I buy you
every year. Hearts
are badly cloned.
Red is red is red.
There's only *so*
many ways to
render
unceasing love.

I'll look above
my head
when I am finished,
await the *splash*
from a speeding car.
The clouds will surely
creep along the canvas,

dawdle like the dogs
I see in their shapes.
They say it's *never*
the same sky twice.

Except when they are
absent. When it's only
glaucous blue.

Tell me raindrops
are only unique
if they will parachute
as flakes. Then melt
on my old English
D. Only for a moment
breathe as snow.

Tell me all this *time*
I've done it wrong:
rinse, repeat, and lather —

the birth of a back-
ward pattern,
of weary, third-
hand hats, daily
failing to veil
my matted hair,
its million, lonely
bubbles.

Early Dementia

I've come up with a line of verse
I mustn't forget.

This is the *worst* of any moment
to have left my phone behind,
be remiss to bring my notebook
and a pen.

I could wrap a *string*
around my finger, like they did in
olden days, but unless I scribe
of yarn, it will fail as a reminder.

The words I must remember
are like a dozen
forget-me-nots.

But the poem is not on flowers—
their faithful, starry blue. Nor of
knights and the great *Danube*.
Besides, there are enough of those
already. Shakespeare said it best.
Who am I to even try?

I get distracted on the bus,
by the couple and their quarrel.
She says he's always drunk.
He says she makes him drink.
But there's nothing of love & hate
within my line.

Upon my getting off,
a pillar of smoke arises
to the sky. I could scrawl of
smog, the parching in our
summer, but I rarely even muse
about the weather. It did
Al Gore
not a single bit of good.

I could slump into my chair
when I get home, let A.I.
do all the work, forget
to remember to remember,
get rid of all the stress.
But I swore off sketchy tech
the day that Windows did its
update.

And no, it's not on glass
and frames, the birds who crash
against it when it's cleaned.

Maybe it's of robots,
someday *replacing* us.
The poets like me, at least.
Our bee upon the stamen,
tipsy on its nectar. That we'd all be
blushing, nude—if it weren't for the
sheep and cotton white. There
amid the aphids.

A lamb of black is
onerous to see, at night
when I am restless, unable to simply
slumber as I should. I lose count
at the drop of a bell.

Maybe that's it. Maybe if I dream
I'll get it back. Keep my Sharpie
by my side while I am snoring,

frantically jotting it down
upon my palm once I *awaken*,

like I did when I was a kid in
reverie, off to some far-
off la-la land, my mother shouting
Pay attention, please!
I need you to go to the store.

That if I neglect to get the flour,
spend the cash on Curly Wurly,
there would surely be hell to pay,
a spanking never *erased*
from the back of my mind.

The Mona Fucking Lisa

After a single session,
I already regret my *sign-up*
for this ekphrastic poetry
course, cursing to you
the assignment I was given:

*Mona Lisa, the fucking Mona
Lisa, like that hasn't been done
a gazillion times*

and yes, I won't be able to fake it,
that everyone and their mailman
knows her visage,
are well-versed in da Vinci's flair,
and their lofty expectations
will be something I can't deliver.

You ask me what our poet friend
was given, the one who always gets
the lucky breaks, and I tell you the
Voice of Fire,

three lines of blue-red-blue,

vertically trite and prosaic,
that no one's ever heard of Barnett
Newman because he sucks,

that I could have scrawled a sonnet
on my kindergarten days,
on a pair of simple colours,

how the Gallery
had been fleeced in '89,
caught *up* in the avant-garde,
how 1.8 million
could have gone to help the homeless,
paid for their chalets
and pedicures, covered
the cost and tip
for their tortellini
Bolognese;

but as it is,
I have to *sleuth* my way
behind that Delphic smile,
invent a tale of Giocondo,

that Leonardo
tried to paint her
minus mirth and maturation,
in 1499,
when his subject began to sob
from pent-up grief, reliving the death
of her baby daughter,

his *Moaning Lisa* a work of art
the Renaissance ignored
(bathing in their beam
of erudition), that even Machiavelli
said *chin up, she needs a grin*;

that when the *time*
arrived to try it all again,
da Vinci made a jest,
a side-splitter, that Lisa barely
smirked at his ill-timed droll,

that he hadn't a *clue*
how it felt
to love and lose,

consumed as he was with
innovation, invention,
his maps and magnum opus,

failing to heed
the red of blood and life,
her blue, blue mood.

Seven Day Rental

One of my students watched

La Maison à Plusieurs Pied

by Jean-Pierre D'Allard,

telling the rise, fall

of the Sainte Bouviers,

ensnared by riches;

hatreds spawned

and business won, lost,

won & lost once more.

She recounts her favourite scene

towards the end,

where a liberated Marie

slaps the face

of brutal Serge, her husband,

played by an aging

Stephane DeJohnette.

It's the one-eighty,

the turning point for both

characters, the moment where love

drops its transcendence,

its fixed and static state.

I think Anise, my student,
sporting occasional welts
I ask nothing about,
has found a muse
to lift her trampled,
gothic spirit,

her nuanced sob
the film, the film.
Yes it is such.

I Am the Light

The Priest has
said the Lord will
send the sun
on good and bad,

the mist to cool
the hunter
and his prey,
even if he's *there*
behind the fence
behind the school,
knowing the girl
will walk alone
at half-past-three,

the breeze to
sweep the leaves
where she will lay,
moistened
with the worms that
squirm along her.

I am the Lamp of
My indifference —
blowing up a shadow
on the wall,
a knife in hand
the length of a
hallowed sword,
ready to thrust its
victim
in the back:

a mother/wife
in slumber, a dream
of her blushing
boy, the way he
cups the kitten
in his grasp,
that all is finally
right with the god-
damn world.

Layers

Say *forgive*,
and I'll hand you
back your shawl.
A poor man's
partial blanket. As
if your shoulders
needed comfort
above the rest. Heat
should never be so
half-a-glass. Only
full is full.

Say *friendship*,
and we'll gift your
scarf to the home-
less. Well, really just
a single unhoused
person.
It will remind them
of their mother,
who swathed it
like an ophidian
round their neck—

before they *tramped* out-
side to play. Make a
fortress out of white.
Throw snowballs
to the wind—
when no one came
to join them in the
battle.

Now speak of *love*
in sighs, lest anyone
else should hear. Take the
toque from the top
of your head (which never
really fit). I'll wear it
now it's stretched.
Enough to shield
my brows
when it is stormy.
Yank it
over my eyes
if I should see you
in the future.

Sheltered from the
reminder that we
trudged in knee-deep
drift. Our mittens hand-
in-hand, boots that fused
in sync, stomping to
some sun we thought
assured us
eternal warmth.

Apophis

They say every-
body loves
a happy ending—except
the author, perhaps.
It's not the *happy*
that's the problem;
all of us prefer it
to the inverse.

And who among us
begrudges
a sunset kiss?
A newborn baby's
birth? Her initial
tooth and grin,
the usual
array of *cute*?

Yet *living* has no tale
of fairy-ends,
merry dénouements,
and to write of such
is *disingenuous*—
to say the very least.

So let me strike a
gloomy *très finis*,
with just a pinch
of subtle joy,
warn a chunk
of broken rock

is headed
our very way, in 2032,
and there's a
1 in 43 *chance*
that we'll be struck,

yet not as bad for *us*
as it was for
T-Rex & his friends,

while we who
duck the bullet
get to do it all again:

Apophis,
lighting up the sky
on Easter Sunday, '36;
just a single
Olympiad later,

when the churches will be
crammed, sardines just
out of their cans,
with the loaves of
daily bread,

singing *He is risen!*
He is risen! The stone
has rolled away!

donning
verdant laurels
only a child
can possibly
see.



*When quizzed if we are bodies with a brain,
or brains with a body, you answered
we are both. And we are neither.
This is life. This is consciousness.*

*The latest calculations show
two trillion galaxies plus. Each with suns
and planets of their own.*

*The Believer clings to their Book,
asks "do you think this is all there is?"*

Visit Andreas on his website if you'd like:
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